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ABSTRACT

Although school counselors can be key figures in the advancement of Career and Technical Education (CTE), in some cases school counselors are not advocates for CTE. Research has shown that some school counselors and parents have negative images of CTE and push for academic education instead of the CTE that could be a viable choice for all students. It has been suggested that in response to this situation, there is a need to bring school counselors on board, with efforts occurring during both preservice and inservice school counselor education. School counselor education programs should equip their graduates with awareness and knowledge of CTE programs and the ability to explain to parents other options than academic education. School counselor internships should include time spent at places where CTE occurs so that counselors-in-training gain first-hand experience of the value of CTE. Proponents of CTE should become advocates in bringing school counselors on board practicing CTE teachers as well as administrators and teacher education faculty should be involved in these efforts. (KC)

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Career and Technical Education: Getting School Counselors on Board

by Susan Norris Huss and Antoinette L. Banks

School counselors can be key figures in the advancement of Career and Technical Education (CTE). School counselors have a great deal of influence with course selection and therefore are key participants in CTE, but in some cases the school counselor is not an advocate for CTE.

In the *Major Needs of Career and Technical Education in the Year 2000* project of the National Dissemination Center for Career and Technical Education (Lewis 2001), the image of CTE among students, teachers, counselors, and administrators was a recurring concern. Some beliefs cited that hinder the image of CTE were the desire of counselors and parents to want students to attend four-year colleges and the statement that counselors and administrators too often see CTE as a "dumping ground" for problem or low-achieving students. Employers even reported that attempts they made at career days at high schools to interest students in preparing for careers in their industries were thwarted when interested students were discouraged from enrolling in CTE courses by their high school counselors.

So it seems imperative that school counselors need to develop a new image and understanding of what CTE is and why it is a viable choice for all students. The question becomes how to assist school counselors in acquiring this new view.

A multifaceted approach is being suggested as a response to this need to bring school counselors on board. It needs to occur during both the preservice and the inservice experience. In other words, it needs to be a part of the continuous professional growth of school counselors. It also needs to be education/information based as well as experientially based. Thus it could be called a 2 x 2 model—at two levels of the school counselor's professional career and both experiential and educational.

Preservice Level

Preservice awareness of CTE needs to occur in the graduate programs training school counselors. There is some movement being made in this direction. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACPREP 1994), which is the accrediting body for counselor education programs, requires that school counselors be given studies that provide an understanding of career development and related factors, so preservice experiences could/should include information about CTE. These studies generally take the form of a course related to career education. CTE should be a part of this. Inclusion of information about CTE may have to come from the CTE professional organizations advocating for the inclusion of this information in course work.

It has been suggested (Hoyt and Hughey 1997) that, with career development being more integrated and holistic, there are benefits in making connections with allied programs also studying the changing workplace, education reform, organizational leadership, and human development. Interdisciplinary projects afford mutual benefit for all participants as well as good training for working collaboratively once school counselors are in the school setting.

Hoyt and Hughey (1997) suggested that school counselor education programs must equip their graduates with the following skills:

- Be aware of and knowledgeable about the kinds of occupational and educational changes being created by the emerging knowledge-based society;
- Be able to assist high school leavers in making reasoned choices about the kind of postsecondary education that is best for them;
- Be able to help parents of today's youth look objectively at possible alternatives to the four-year college/university degree.

These skills could be developed in the career education course, in any course related specifically to school counseling, and in the internship experience.

Most school counselors in training are required to have 600 hours of internship experience in the school setting. This experience could include time spent at places where CTE occurs so that the school counselor in training gains first-hand experience of the value of CTE. This experience would enhance the future school counselor's ability to advocate for CTE in their own future work setting. A program that could be the specific topic of this internship project could be how school-to-work has been implemented in a particular school system. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994 focused attention on the importance of assisting in the transition from school to work (Granello and Sears 1999). It provided seed money to states and local communities to build school-to-work systems to prepare youth for high-skill, high-wage jobs, or for further education. School-to-work had three essential elements—school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. These elements are closely related to school counseling and Tech Prep and could form the basis for working partnerships.

There are some efforts being made nationally that may have a positive impact on the school counselor and CTE. The Transforming School Counseling Initiative that is funded by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and administered by the Education Trust has as one of its goals the elimination of the academic caste system found in most schools in the United States <http://www.edtrust.org/main/school_counseling.asp>. The focus is on training school counselors to be more systemic in their approach to their role in schools and to advocate for all students. Through this initiative, efforts have been made to transform school counseling and counselor preparation. This initiative in-

cludes 6 counselor education programs as principal investigators and over 23 companion counselor education programs. The major components of this initiative are leadership, advocacy for all students, teaming and collaboration, counseling and coordination, and assessment and use of data. Technology and diversity are infused throughout.

Preservice school counselors need to be made aware of the relationship between what they are learning and CTE. School counselors can use their leadership skills in the development of vocational decision-making and interpersonal skills. Their training in collaboration and consultation enables them to serve as consultants to teachers and parents. School counselors are trained in understanding the developmental needs of students as well as important components to assist students in making the school-to-work transition (Granello and Sears 1999). These are examples of the skills already being taught in school counselor training programs that could be easily fused with CTE. CTE needs to continue to grow as part of school counselor education programs.

Inservice Level

Proponents of CTE must take an advocacy role in bringing practicing school counselors on board. They are the people who understand CTE and how it fits into the total school curriculum.

There are also some efforts nationally to provide support for school counselors being more technologically in tune. As work with the Transforming School Counseling Initiative continued, it became apparent that similar work needed to be done with those school counselors already in the field. As a result, the Education Trust recently received a grant from the Metropolitan Life Foundation to support the National School Counselor Training Initiative. This initiative is developing training modules for practicing school counselors in the areas of advocacy for all students, leadership and collaboration, data-driven change, and increased academic success. Besides these national efforts, other advocacy activities need to occur.

CTE information needs to be provided to practicing school counselors in every possible arena. The professional associations of the stakeholders need to interface and work collaboratively to transform the image of CTE for school counselors.

It is only through the concerted effort of all who are proponents of CTE that this will be accomplished. Listed here is a beginning list of reasonable and not too time-consuming activities or policies that would help bring those all-important school counselors on board. Since this is a beginning list only, please add to it and share with others.

- Be sure a school counselor is on the advisory committee for the CTE program in your school.
- Invite the school counselor to your department meetings, showcase meetings, meetings with business partners, and curriculum meetings.
- Share with school counselors success stories of your students both while in school and after they graduate.
- Include the school counselor on any appropriate listservs and include them in appropriate mailings.
- Provide workshops for local inservice days and specifically invite the counselor.
- Offer to do programs at school counselor conferences (nearly every state has one) as well as at their national convention.
- Volunteer to write an article for the state counselor association newsletter about CTE.
- Volunteer to serve on any committee that has to do with the curriculum so you are sure CTE is heard.
- Establish a task force between your state association and the state school counselor association to address the problem more globally.
- Contact your university's school counselor education program and be certain it is included in their curriculum.

These are just some suggestions. As all good brainstormers know, one idea leads to another and another. By approaching this issue from two directions (preservice and inservice) and from an experiential and educational perspective, change can occur and school counselors can become strong supporters of Career and Technical Education

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